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Civil Defense Planners Hatch a New Scheme

Little is heard these days of civil defense, that seedbed of nuclear hallucinations that was laughed into obscurity when President Kennedy urged his fellow citizens to dig their own holes. But with \$85 million a year to spend, CD is actually a booming enterprise, and if Defense Secretary Schlesinger has his way, it is about to embark on a major new venture aimed at relocating massive portions of the American population in the event of a nuclear crisis.

Buried deep in Schlesinger's annual Military Posture statement to Congress, and unnoted by the press, is announcement of a plan to begin work on "allocation schemes to permit the population from some 250 of our urbanized areas to be assigned to appropriate host areas." The statement explains that "The primary end product of this first step is expected to be the publication of information materials for distribution to the public in periods of severe crisis. These publications," the statement continues, "would advise the public 'where to go and what to do' should relocation be implemented."

An SGR inquiry to CD headquarters produced the information that maps are now being prepared to indicate "host" areas within 100 miles of every metropolitan area of over 50,000 population. The next step, according to a CD official, will be to survey the host areas to determine what facilities are available for the urban refugees. This will be followed by the preparation of detailed guides on escape routes and transportation facilities.

The CD official said that the survey of the host areas will be aimed at identifying, for example, "homes with large basements." He emphasized that "we are just starting," but that the ultimate aim is to "get agreements between cities and the host areas so that we won't have some areas inundated and others unused."

At this point, he explained, "it's strictly in the computer stage and no one is going around the host areas to ask people if they'll take people from the cities."

But sometime before next June 30, CD plans to undertake "eight to 10 pilot projects to provide on-the-job experience and to field test techniques." Again, it was emphasized that the project is nowhere near the phase of actually lining up hosts. "We still have to gather a lot of data before we move to that phase," it was explained. He added that CD

did not envision the construction of shelters in the host areas; rather, the intention is to identify and make do with what is already there.

Schlesinger's statement observed that even if a Soviet attack were concentrated on US nuclear forces, a nuclear exchange "would still produce a large amount of nuclear fallout which could drift over our cities"—hence the need for adding to the shelter program, which now numbers 108 million spaces, stocked with supplies for eight days. But he went on to state that "Since it is quite possible that a period of intense crisis would occur before an attack, it may be feasible to relocate non-essential per-

(Continued on page 2.)

In Brief

Having invested over \$150 million in magneto-hydrodynamics, the Soviets lead the world in the field, and their MHD research facility is the centerpiece of US-USSR cooperation in energy research. But Americans who are in on that cooperation say the Soviet apparatus is sloppily constructed, antiquated relative to the state of theory, and broken down a good deal of the time. "We're not getting much out of it," reports one American visitor.

The Kennedy camp is now persuaded that NSF would be a poor choice for administering the ambitious civilian technology plans manifested in the Senator's long-lingering National Science Policy and Priorities Act (S. 32). But as chairman of a subcommittee with no technical jurisdiction outside of NSF, Kennedy had no choice other than to attach it to the Foundation. Now, however, there is talk that he can at least stir up the issue and evoke support for an altogether new civilian agency by bringing the issue before the Office of Technology Assessment, whose board he chairs.

How long does Alvin Weinberg plan to stay on as chief of R&D for the Federal Energy Office, a post that he took only after much arm twisting? Weinberg says he not making any promises beyond one year. He also notes wryly that he's been assigned the office formerly occupied by ousted energy adviser John Love.

Drug Reactions: Study Finds Chaos at FDA

If you've been swallowing pharmaceutical drugs with the comforting notion that somebody out there surely must be collecting and monitoring data about the dangerous side effects that, if only in very small numbers, inevitably accompany all drug usage, don't rest easy. The General Accounting Office, Congress' investigative agency, has taken a look at how the Food and Drug Administration is performing the task, and has discovered a colossal mess.

The FDA reckons that six million people in the United States will suffer adverse reactions to approved drugs each year, at an estimated cost of about \$627 million in medical services and loss of work, so the subject goes beyond mere statistical interest.

FDA set up an adverse drug reaction reporting system in 1960 so that it could take action on reports of severe reactions and identify trends of reactions with individual drugs. But the GAO found that some medical officers in the regulatory division didn't even know the reporting system existed, others said they didn't use it, and others said they were uncertain whether or not the burden of proving that a specific drug caused a specific reaction rested with FDA or the drug manufacturer.

To see how this lack of understanding has affected the FDA's execution of its legal responsibility to ensure a safe supply of drugs, the GAO selected 50 drugs at random and traced the action on reports of adverse reactions made to the FDA between October 1969 and May 1972.

The 50 drugs attracted 1640 reports of 620 different reactions.

Medical officers in the regulatory division informed GAO that 222 of these reactions were not listed on the drug labels. Of these unlisted reactions, 60 were considered serious enough to be included in label warnings if a causal relationship could be established.

The GAO investigators brought the matter to the attention of officials in another part of the FDA—the Bureau of Drugs, which is the parent agency of the regulatory division. After taking a look at the 60 supposedly unlisted adverse reactions, these officials informed GAO that 24 of them were, in fact, included in label warnings. Medical officers in the regulatory division simply had not recognized the terminology. So much for the clarity of drug labels.

One of the drugs gathered reports of double vision, heart arrest, and convulsions, but the medical officer responsible for regulating the drug said that he was unaware of the adverse reaction reporting system—which was housed in a different branch of FDA—so he didn't know about the reports.

But the faults don't just lie with FDA, for the GAO

investigators visited a few hospitals and found that their reporting record was lax, to put it mildly. Private hospitals in the United States treat 27 million patients a year, and they feed them an average of 20 different drugs each. If, as the FDA itself reckons, 12 per cent of those patients react adversely to the drugs, three million reports should be filed a year. But from 1960 to 1972, FDA received a total of 75,000 adverse reaction reports from private hospitals.

"Our discussions with officials of five hospitals revealed a lack of interest in FDA's reporting program," the GAO report states. It added that "although hospital officials readily admit that numerous adverse reactions occur in their hospitals annually, most of their reporting systems were inactive."

While the GAO report was in preparation, FDA belatedly set up a communications system between the regulatory officers and the unit which receives and monitors adverse reaction reports. It also began a program to inform doctors and hospitals of their responsibility to report adverse reactions to drugs.

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CIVIL DEFENSE *(Continued from page 1.)*

sonnel from cities and high-risk areas during such a period."

In conjunction with the relocation plan, he stated, "some preliminary contingency planning is being undertaken. . . ." This planning includes, he reported, the preparation of maps "depicting areas deemed to be at high risk from the direct effects of nuclear weapons. . . . These maps assume military installations and industrial and population concentrations would be high value targets. Consideration is also being given to the designation of those areas which may be subjected to high levels of fallout as high risk areas."

Just how quickly the Defense Department plans to move along with the relocation scheme is not clear, nor is information available on the geographical areas selected for the pilot projects that are to be carried out during the next few months.

But with Schlesinger having announced that the US is shifting its sights from exclusive concentration on Soviet nuclear forces, the relocation scheme indicates that US planners assume that the Soviets plan to do the same. And once again we have the old cycle of the arms race being egged on by supposedly defensive measures that decrease rather than increase security.

It must surely have occurred to the CD planners that if the Soviets aim to destroy the American population, that can just as easily be accomplished in the countryside as in town. But with \$85 million a year to spend, they've got to do something. DSG

EPA Yields to Agriculture Dept. on DDT Spraying

Long the pet of the Nixon Administration in the bygone days when purity came cheap, the Environmental Protection Agency has lately been taking a battering in its attempts to maintain environmental standards, and the latest involves its capitulation to the Forest Service on the resumption of DDT spraying. EPA Administrator Russell E. Train, however, spat out some nasty words before running up the white flag.

The occasion for Train's remarks was a public announcement that EPA would allow DDT to be sprayed on fir forests in the Pacific northwest to combat an epidemic of tussock moths. As Train told it, EPA had to capitulate to the pro-DDT lobby largely because of the Forest Service's myopia.

"I believe that the efforts to date on the part of the Forest Service to develop real alternatives to DDT for the control of the tussock moth have been almost totally inadequate—to the point of dereliction," he said. "Particularly, the inadequate field tests of alternatives and the failure to test DDT itself this past summer, are representative of poor planning for forest pest management," he added.

It was the Department of Agriculture, parent of the Forest Service, which banned use of DDT in forested areas in 1968—four years before the EPA extended the prohibition to virtually all uses of the pesticide. But it was not until last summer, when the tussock moth had already denuded 800,000 acres of prime fir forests in Washington, Idaho and Oregon, that the Forest Service did any serious research and testing of alternatives to DDT to control the pest. And it only did the research then because EPA had refused to lift the ban on DDT the year before.

Train said that he had agreed to allow DDT to be used this year only after he had extracted a promise from the Secretary of Agriculture to support "a fully funded, comprehensive research program on tussock moth control which will support registration of effective and environmentally acceptable alternatives to DDT before next year." He also imposed a similar condition when he agreed to lift the ban on DDT to allow spraying of dried peas in Washington and Idaho this spring.

Senate Issues Index of All Federal Advisers

The Senate Government Operations Committee has published a voluminous index that presumably identifies everyone who is officially advising the federal government about anything.

Covering 995 pages, the index lists 1439 federal advisory committees, and 24,500 persons who serve on them. The index is derived from four weight-lifter volumes that the committee collected earlier in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Act, which was intended to open advisory committee hearings to the public, has turned out to be something of a disappointment, since federal agencies have ferreted out a number of loopholes that enable their advisory committees to operate in executive session. But there is considerable Congressional interest in eliminating the loopholes, and the publication of the advisory index is an indication of ongoing legislative concern.

Press, library and "official use" copies of the Federal Advisory Committees Index and the four volume report are available without charge from: Subcommittee on Budgeting, Management and Expenditures, 161 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

For others who wish to obtain the volumes, they are available from the Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. The index is \$8.95, and the other volumes are as

follows:

Part I—No. 5270-01847—(Introductory material, Presidential advisory committees and others, alphabetical by department, Agriculture through Defense) Domestic postpaid, \$13.80. GPO Bookstore, \$12.75.

Part II—No. 5270-01848—(Health Education and Welfare) Domestic Postpaid, \$16.25. GPO Bookstore, \$15.00.

Part III—No. 5270-01849—(Housing and Urban Development through Treasury and independent agencies from Administrative Conference of the United States through American Revolution Bicentennial Commission) Domestic postpaid, \$10.85. GPO Bookstore, \$10.00.

Part IV—No. 5270-01850—(Independent agencies from Arms Control and Disarmament Agency through Water Resources Agency) Domestic postpaid, \$11.10. GPO Bookstore, \$10.25.

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NAS Head Stirs Row by Sniping at Herbicide Study

Attempts by National Academy of Sciences President Philip Handler to cast doubt on the validity of parts of the Vietnam defoliation report produced by his own organization has aroused bitterness within the venerable NAS. Handler's motives can only be speculated on, but since the generally hardhitting report is regarded as a key piece of evidence in efforts to outlaw the military use of herbicides, anything that lessens its impact is considered unpardonable by anti-defoliation campaigners.

The report, which was published on February 28, generally conformed to pre-publication news leaks which told of widespread and persistent damage to Vietnam's mangrove forests, economic loss from devastation of some areas of hardwood forests, and considerable resentment among the Vietnamese people (SGR Vol. IV, No. 5).

But it also contained a 14-page introduction and summary written by Handler which attempted to discredit some of the findings. According to Handler, the economic and social research that went into the report was "less than satisfying" and in particular he questioned the authenticity of accounts that herbicides killed children and animals in the highlands.

Those whose research Handler attempted to downplay are understandably upset about the matter, and some, in conversations with SGR, noted that Handler's interpretations are not in complete harmony with data contained in the report.

One who is particularly infuriated was a consultant to the committee, Gerald C. Hickey of Cornell's Southeast Asia Program. Hickey, who is recognized as a world authority on the Montagnards, conducted a series of interviews with Montagnard people in refugee camps during the Spring, 1972, offensive. These produced remarkably consistent reports that the herbicide sprays killed children and caused a variety of illnesses.

Hickey told SGR that the Montagnards very accurately described the spray planes, and the effects of the herbicides on the crops and trees. Their reports of the effect on people and animals, he said, almost invariably spoke of skin rashes, abdominal pains, diarrhea and many deaths among children.

He said that he was impressed by the internal consistency of the reports, and after the fighting died down he went into several Montagnard villages and found the accounts were corroborated by the villagers there.

Nevertheless, Handler says in his commentary on the Academy's report that the accounts of death and illness among Montagnard villagers were derived from "secondhand" information. He called the

reports "tales", and said that it is regrettable that the committee couldn't visit the Montagnards in their own locales to verify them.

Nowhere does the committee express its regret that its own members could not get to the Montagnard villages to check out Hickey's research; rather, it concluded that "reports of human illness following spraying are so striking it is difficult to dismiss them as simply the effects of propaganda, high normal death rates, or failure to understand cause and effect."

Be that as it may, the Academy's report is a mine of information on the extent of spraying and the areas affected, and it concludes that some areas of mangrove forests were so heavily sprayed that they have been completely denuded and are unlikely to recover for at least 100 years. Even Handler says that unless a massive reforestation program is conducted, "mankind will have been guilty of a large and ugly depredation of our natural heritage."

On the basis of information supplied chiefly from military records, together with vegetation maps and aerial photographs, the Academy committee reported that in all nearly 18 million gallons of herbicides were sprayed on an area of South Vietnam equal in size to the State of Connecticut.

The Academy's figures and analysis of the extent of herbicide spraying are reckoned to be the most accurate so far reported. They indicate that more than a third of South Vietnam's mangrove forests, a tenth of the inland forests, 3.2 per cent of the cultivated land, and in all, nearly a tenth of the entire country received at least one dose of herbicide.

Battle lines have already been drawn up around the interpretation of the report. On the one hand some members of Congress, led by Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah), have suggested that it strongly supports the case for a flat ban on herbicides in warfare. But the Department of Defense has countered that "a close reading of the content or the conclusions of each section would develop the following general conclusion: some damage has resulted from the military use of herbicides in Vietnam, however, most of the allegations of massive, permanent ecological and physiological damage are unfounded."

In the meantime, Secretary of State Kissinger informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in executive session during his nomination hearing last year that the Administration is reevaluating its belief that herbicides and tear gases are not covered by the Geneva protocol on chemical and biological weapons.

However, neither Kissinger nor any other Administration has spoken out on the issue since then.

Prison Chief Reveals Plan for Research Program

The Bureau of Prisons is planning "at least several" correctional research facilities in which new approaches to treating inmates will be tested on prison "volunteers," according to testimony given by prison officials to a House judiciary subcommittee looking into reports of "Clockwork Orange" programs at federal prisons.

At present, the federal government operates only one medical research facility for prisoners, at Springfield, Missouri, but another combined treatment and research prison will be opened later this year at Butner, North Carolina, and the committee was told that others, as yet unspecified, are being considered.

Martin G. Groder, warden-designate of Butner, and Norman A. Carlson, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, were called before Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier's (D-Wisc.) subcommittee on courts, civil liberties and the administration of justice—the only Congressional committee that has complete oversight over the federal prison system—to explain the Bureau's behavior modification programs, and to outline the plans for Butner.

Their appearance before the committee came only a couple of weeks after the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration announced that it was getting out of the business of supporting behavioral and medical research, and consequently public interest in the topic was at its height. The debate about the propriety of behavior modification, being totally unencumbered by a definition of what constitutes behavior modification, was quickly brought down to earth by Carlson, who informed the committee that pretty well everything the Bureau of Prisons does is aimed at changing behavior.

Nevertheless, both Carlson and Groder were at pains to emphasize that no program in any federal prison uses aversion therapy. Groder also added that none of correctional research programs "already preliminarily chosen or being considered favorably" for Butner "involve the methods of modern-day torture known as aversive conditioning, specifically the misuse of drugs, electric shock or psychosurgery."

The Bureau of Prisons has, however, recently been in some trouble over a program it was operating at Springfield which attempted to change the behavior of particularly recalcitrant offenders by a system of reward conditioning. According to Carlson, the program was terminated because it was too expensive to administer, but it had been under test in the courts on the ground that it constituted cruel and unusual punishment. The decision to scrap the

venture also luckily came a few days before Kastenmeier's subcommittee issued a highly critical report on it.

As for plans for Butner, Groder successfully managed to confuse the committee by using a string of psychological jargon in describing what was being planned, but he at least got over the message that the facility will be used to test innovative techniques which, if they prove to be successful, will be used in other federal prisons.

Butner will, in fact, consist of two essentially separate facilities. One will be a medical center for particularly disturbed prisoners. Capable of housing up to 140 such prisoners, it will be primarily a treatment facility. The other part will house 200 prisoners, split into four groups, each of which will be put through one research program.

Groder suggested that the basis for the programs will be the type of group therapy and self-help common to some drug rehabilitation programs.

Under questioning, Groder said that prisoners selected to go to Butner will be given every chance to refuse, and they will be free to return to their original prison at any time. They will, however, be within a year or so of parole when they are selected, and therefore will be reluctant to do anything to jeopardize their standing before the parole board. Thus freedom of consent will have a few constraints.

In Print

Following are some recent publications of more than routine interest:

Arms Control Today, monthly newsletter of the Arms Control Association, an increasingly influential assemblage that includes many former top-level Defense officials who would like to dampen the arms race. The publication provides some of the shrewdest and best-informed analysis of DoD affairs to be found anywhere. (Membership, which includes the newsletter, \$10 per year; students \$7.50; or the letter, without membership, \$10. ACA, 1717 Mass. Ave. N.W., Suite 503, Wash., D.C. 20036.)

NIH 1973 Annual Report, provides a compact guide to NIH programs, budgets, and top officials, as of the fiscal year ending last June 30. (DHEW Publication No. NIH 74-3, 78 pages, available without charge, NIH, Bethesda, Md., 20014.)

Bibliography of Environmental Reports, 960 pages listing scientific, technical, and economic reports published by the Environmental Protection Agency and its various predecessors. (\$7.50 GPO Publication No. EPL 21: En 8/5/9/73, US Government Printing Office, Wash., D.C. 20402.)

Kennedy Plan for Medical Panel Draws Veto Threat

Administration officials say they will recommend a veto if Congress approves Senator Kennedy's proposal to establish a Presidential Panel to keep an eye on the federal government's biomedical research policies (SGR Vol. IV, No. 5), but the measure nevertheless was endorsed by the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee.

The Administration is concerned that the panel would undermine the authority of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and hamper efforts to establish firmer control over NIH policies at the HEW headquarters level. Since the panel would channel its complaints about the overall balance and operation of NIH's programs directly to Congress, that is what Kennedy had in mind.

On the day that the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare had the bill under consideration, Frank Carlucci, deputy secretary of HEW, wrote to chairman Harrison Williams (D-N.J.):

"I believe that the National Institutes of Health are well-run, well-managed, and that their pro-

grams are easily accessible to Congressional oversight and review. I do not believe that the establishment of a Presidentially appointed panel would either enhance Congressional control or aid in the administration of the health programs of HEW. To the contrary, it would make program administration more complicated and inefficient. Moreover, the proposed dual reporting relationship cannot but result in undermining the responsibility of the HEW Secretary and the Assistant Secretary for Health." Carlucci added that he will recommend a Presidential veto.

Another item in the bill (S. 2893) which also drew strong Administration opposition is a provision that would subject biomedical research contracts to the same type of peer review that is routinely used for grants. Pressure for this requirement has been coming from basic researchers who view with considerable concern NIH's expansion into contract research that is conducted outside the peer review system.

Killian White House Study To Miss April Deadline

Banished from the White House by presidential edict, the leadership of the scientific community has followed form and convened a study "to suggest means whereby the unique contributions of science and technology can be most effectively incorporated in the policy-making process. . ."—the assumption apparently being that at present such is not the case.

The study, under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, is headed by one of the senior alumni of the system that prevailed prior to Nixon's abolition of the White House science office last year, James R. Killian Jr., honorary chairman of MIT. Chief of staff for the study is David Beckler, a longtime veteran of the oldtime White House science advisory apparatus.

When the study was announced, early last month, April 1 was stated as the reporting date, but it is now recognized that there is no need to hurry, since the earliest possible date for a return of science to the White House is post-1976 election day. "Early summer" is now said to be the likely date for delivery of the committee's report.

Serving with Killian on what is titled the Ad Hoc Committee on Science and Technology are:

Graham Allison, Harvard; Ivan L. Bennett, NYU; Harold Brown, Caltech; James B. Fisk, Bell Labs; Robert C. Guinness, Standard Oil; Edwin Land, Polaroid; Franklin A. Long, Cornell; Emanuel R. Piore, IBM (retired); Kenneth S. Pitzer, U. of Calif.,

Commerce Re-establishes Technical Advisory Board

Nobody noticed 18 months ago that the Department of Commerce Technical Advisory Board just expired into non-existence, and there is no reason that anyone should expect anything of it now that it has been re-established to provide guidance for the most unorchestrated collection of technical agencies assembled under one departmental banner, but for the record, it's back with a characteristically high-powered cast of commuting advisers.

The Board, nominated by Betsy Ancker-Johnson, assistant secretary for science and technology, held its first meeting at the end of January and plans to meet about every six weeks for two days. The first meeting was devoted to "energy."

The members are: William Carey, Arthur D. Little, Inc.; Paul F. Chenea, General Motors; Donald W. Collier, Borg-Warner; Thomas Fox, Carnegie Mellon University; Eugene G. Fubini, Fubini Consultants; Roger H. Gilman, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; Willis W. Harman, Stanford Research Institute; Willie L. Leftwich, Hudson, Leftwich, and Davenport; Richard Morse, MIT Development Foundation; William J. Pietenpol, consultant; Malcolm E. Pruitt, Dow Chemical; David Ragone, University of Michigan; Hugh F. Steen, El Paso Natural Gas; Robert B. Stobaugh, Harvard.

Berkeley; Donald B. Rice, Rand Corp.; James Tobin, Yale, and Charles H. Townes, U. Calif., Berkeley.

Technological Protectionism Gets Another Look

The naughty but irrepressible subject of technological protectionism has popped up as of prime interest on the agenda of the little-known but high-powered Department of State Advisory Committee on Science and Foreign Affairs, which was established last summer to advise the Department on scientific developments that may ultimately have a bearing on foreign policy.

Since the United States is piously committed to free trade, it is deemed uncouth for officialdom to flirt with the notion that this country might impose restrictions on exports of one of its prime assets—high technology. But organized labor, some industries and a sprinkling of economists are increasingly disturbed by the fact that lots of American-devised know-how is going to low-wage countries and coming back in the form of products that undersell American-made manufactures.

As reported in a summary of the Committee's deliberations, the subject was accorded a high priority at the three two-day sessions that have been held so far, and has been scheduled for further consideration.

"The Committee's work in the area of technology transfer," the summary states, "centered around the question of whether it is in the national interest to impose governmental restraints on the export of private technology for national economic or commercial reasons, as distinct from national security reasons. The Committee studied the conclusions reached by various studies of the effects of technology transfers on the United States economy, and it inquired into such matters as the recoupment of governmental expenditures for research and development costs, and the possible consequences of the applications of 'discretionary fees' to exports of American technology."

Also taken up by the Committee was the subject of cooperation with other nations on uranium enrichment programs concerning which it "assessed the implications for United States policy of the growing strengths and competence of other nations in the enrichment field, and studied the question of what could be done to bring the resources of the United States private sector more fully to bear on the problem of developing more efficient separation technologies and constructing additional enrichment facilities."

And it also examined "the question of what posture toward the acquisition and dissemination of earth resources satellite data is optimal for the United States at this time."

Finally, it reported that "on a lower scale of priority and effort, the committee... reviewed cer-

tain aspects of United States international policies and programs relating to population growth control, United States participation in the science and technology programs of international organizations, with particular reference to the United Nations Committee on Science and Technology for Development, and the impact of North-South relationships on international environmental problems and programs.

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for June 14-15.

The members are: Lewis Branscomb, IBM; W. Kenneth Davis, Bechtel; John Hightower, University of New Mexico; John Leddy, former assistant secretary of State for European Affairs, (retired); Gordon MacDonald, Dartmouth; Simon Ramo, TRW, Inc.; Dean Rusk, former Secretary of State; Eugene Skolnikoff, MIT, and Herman Pollack, director of the Department's Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs.

NSF Opens Bucharest Office

Reflecting an increase in scientific traffic between the US and Eastern Europe, NSF has opened a scientific liaison office in Bucharest, Romania. The office, headed by Sidney G. Smith, will handle matters concerning the US-Romania Program of Science and Technology Cooperation, and will also assist with NSF's dealings with other countries in the region. Additional information is available from NSF's Office of International Programs, 1800 G St., Nw., Washington, D.C. 20550. Tel. (202) 632-5798.

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Congress Moves to Strengthen Information Act

Congress is quietly moving to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act by closing up loopholes which have enabled government agencies to block the public's access to information.

The House Government Operations Committee has approved a bill which strictly limits the amount of time an agency has to respond to a request for information, and which streamlines the court procedure against denial of information. And the Senate subcommittee on administrative practice and procedure has recently approved an even stricter measure which is now before the full Judiciary Committee.

The House bill, sponsored by Rep. William S. Moorhead (D-Pa), would give government agencies only 10 days to respond to a request for information, and 20 days to answer an appeal. This provision is designed to prevent agencies from using the effective tactic of delaying action on requests for information for so long that it amounts to refusal to hand over the information. Government agencies have found the delaying tactic to be particularly effective against inquisitive reporters.

In letters to the Government Operations Committee both the Department of Justice and the Department of Defense have vehemently objected to the 10-day limit, on the grounds that it is too inflexible, and in many cases will be impossible to meet. But the Committee says in its report on the bill that it expects 10 days to be sufficient, except "when the information is stored in a remote location outside the country."

Moorhead's bill would also enable those who successfully appeal against a decision to withhold information to be awarded their legal costs from government funds, at the court's discretion.

Another common tactic to block public access to government information is to refuse to hand it over on the grounds that it is classified. The most famous instance of such maneuvering involved a request by Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink (D-Hawaii) for documents concerning the predicted environmental effects of the Amchitka atomic weapons test in 1972. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court, which rejected the request for the documents on the basis that the court has jurisdiction to determine only that a document is, in fact, classified; it has no authority to determine whether or not classification is justified.

To get round that, Moorhead's bill says that court review may include secret examination of the content of agency files to determine whether the agency is justified in withholding them under any of the exemptions set out in the Freedom of Information Act. Not surprisingly, the Department of Defense has objected to such an intrusion into its secret files.

It is not clear whether quasi-governmental bodies such as the National Academy of Sciences would be included in the provisions of Moorhead's bill. The Committee's report on the bill says that it covers "those entities which may not be considered agencies...but which perform governmental functions and control information of interest to the public." The Justice Department says, however, that it is not clear from the bill's language whether it would apply to such groups as the Girl Scouts of America, the National Academy of Sciences, or the Daughters of the American Revolution.

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